

# Old West Reproductions,®Inc.

446 Florence South Loop ~ Florence, MT 59833 ~ USA

January 22, 2013

RE: HB 215

HD 90 Representative Ed Greef  
State Capitol Building  
Helena, MT

Dear Ed,

Since I was a small boy, growing up in Montana gave me quite an education regarding our history. As I grew older, I began collecting western artifacts, particularly those associated with our early days as a Territory and a State. Antique firearms naturally fell into the frontier history category. It didn't take long to realize how important the Winchester Model of 1873 was to Montana settlers between 1875 and 1895. It seems that it was a favorite of many ranchers, cowboys, farmers and miners throughout that period. Many of these rifles were brought to this area by individuals moving west, but many more were purchased commercially in hardware and dry goods stores all across this state. One of the early Model 1873 Winchesters was sold to a customer by the I. G. Baker Company of Ft. Benton in 1875. The receipt for this gun still exists today in a private collection. Famous Texas cattleman Charlie Goodnight gave his fancy deluxe model 1873 Winchester to his friend Nelson Story, a Montana cattle baron from Bozeman.

In 1875 Rancher/Statesman Granville Stuart ordered several very fancy 1873 model rifles directly from the Winchester Repeating Arms Company in New Haven Connecticut. The guns he ordered were known as the "ONE OF ONE THOUSAND". These special rifles became even more famous when in 1950 Universal Studios released the motion picture "WINCHESTER 73" starring James "Jimmy" Stewart. Several of these premium One of One Thousand

1873 models found their way to Montana in the early days. In 1925 one of these highly prized Winchesters was dug up during some excavation, right here in Helena. Unfortunately, the history of this particular rifle was never discovered and its whereabouts today are unknown. These are just a few examples of the important historic role this firearm played during the frontier days here in Montana. These examples can be found in 2 reference books: *"The Story of the Winchester – 1 of 1000 and 1 of 100 Rifles"* by Dr. Edmund E. Lewis, 2009 and *"Winchester – The Golden Age of American Gun Making and the Winchester 1 of 1000"* by R.L. Wilson, 1983.

It is quite evident that the Winchester Model of 1873 played a very important roll in the settling of our great state. I think it is most worthy of being considered as the Montana State Historical Rifle.

Sincerely,

Rick M. Bachman, President

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